

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# Th12a

## ADDENDUM

December 8, 2020

TO: Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties

FROM: South Coast District Staff

SUBJECT: **ADDENDUM TO ITEM Th12a APPLICATION NO. A-5-VEN-20-0060 (VENICE COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION) FOR THE COMMISSION MEETING OF THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020**

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### **I. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM THE APPELLANTS, THE APPLICANT AND THE PUBLIC; STAFF'S RESPONSE TO THE CORRESPONDENCE**

Since the publication of the staff report on November 20, 2020, Commission staff has received approximately 30 letters (via email) in opposition to the proposed affordable housing project and approximately 788 form letters (via email) and 1 unique letter (via email) in support of the proposed project. It should be noted that the 788 form letters received were dated before the publication of the Coastal Commission staff report on November 20, 2020 and all contain the same text (see a form letter on page 47 of the second correspondence); however, they are each signed by a different individual in support of the proposed project.

As mentioned above, after the staff report was published, Commission staff received approximately 30 letters from the appellants and other members of the public expressing opposition to staff's recommendation and raising the following contentions: 1). Zero residential parking is not sufficient, is unprecedented and sets a dangerous statewide precedent; 2). Commission staff ignores the proposed 4,441 sq. ft. of supportive services as part of the parking requirements; 3). Loading and deliveries will use the public parking spaces on Lincoln Boulevard; 4). Commission staff ignored the large number of Police/Fire responses to Safe Place for Youth

(SPY) and Venice Community Housing Corporation's (VCH) buildings and incorrectly stated that the project was compatible with the neighborhood; 5). The applicant should not receive residential parking waivers since the vast majority of their clients will be non-residents; and 6). Commission staff ignored the study done by Pacific Urbanism which states that Venice has the 8th highest rate of affordable housing in all of Los Angeles and the concentration of affordable housing in Venice sets a dangerous, statewide precedent.

Commission staff has the following responses to the letters of opposition to the project.

First, as previously explained in the staff report, although the City-approved project provides 6 commercial parking spaces, the City found that additional parking was not necessary for the supportive residential units, consistent with Policy I.A.14 of the certified LUP which specifically allows for the normally required parking requirements to be reduced for affordable housing, such as the approved project. The policy does not limit how much the parking requirements can be reduced by. The two studies referenced in the staff report on page 19 show that there is reduced parking demand. In addition, the project site is located approximately 100 feet from a public transit stop, the project site will provide 42 bicycle parking spaces for residents and staff, and the applicant contends that the residents will receive a free transit pass. For these reasons, the parking for the project is in substantial conformance with the provisions of the certified Venice LUP and is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts to public access to the coast. Moreover, it should be noted that the certified LUP serves as guidance and the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act are the standard of review; and, in this case, Commission staff concurs with the City's findings that the approved project is consistent with the Coastal Act.

Secondly, the applicant contends that the supportive services are reserved specifically for the residents. With regard to the 4,441 sq. ft. of supportive services, as stated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> footnote on page 19 of the staff report, the 4,441 sq. ft. of supportive services was not factored into the parking calculations as the use of this space is for the use of residents only, as required by California Government Code Section 65651, and is considered accessory to the residential use, and should not subject the project to any additional requirements. As further mentioned on page 20, the 4,441 sq. ft. of supportive services are accessory to the underlying use and do not require any additional parking because the supportive services have already been factored into the overall intensity of use of the site.

Third, with regard to vehicle access to the project site, as stated on page 9 of the staff report and on page 23 of the City's findings included in the public record: "An existing driveway on Lincoln Boulevard will be closed and all vehicle access will be provided from a 10-foot-wide driveway on Garfield Avenue, along the southeasterly portion of the site."

Fourth, with regard to the police/fire responses and safety concerns, the letters in opposition to the project assert that staff ignored the large number of Police/Fire responses to SPY and VCH's buildings in recommending a finding that the project is compatible with the neighborhood. Specifically, the contentions are that the project will adversely impact emergency response times to the neighborhoods adjacent to the project corridor and create safety issues. However, the alleged safety concerns do not raise a substantial issue regarding consistency with the community character or visual resources policies of the Coastal Act, or any other Chapter 3 policy. Therefore, they are not valid grounds for appeal to the Commission.

Fifth, with regard to residential parking waivers, as stated on page 21 of the staff report, the waiver for the residential parking requirements is to waive parking requirements for the residential development, as the residents are expected to have a lower demand for parking than would otherwise be needed for tenants of market-rate units. As mentioned above, the two studies referenced in the staff report on page 19 show that there is reduced parking demand.

Finally, with regard to the appellants' assertion that Commission staff ignored that Venice has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest rate of affordable housing in all of Los Angeles, Commission staff acknowledges that there is still a critical need for affordable housing in Venice Beach and one of the City's goals in approving this project was to provide more supportive housing to alleviate homelessness in Venice. As stated on pages 16-19 of the staff report, the development of affordable housing in the coastal zone is consistent with the public access and community character policies of the Coastal Act.

With regard to the letters in support of the project, between December 1, 2020 and December 2, 2020, the Commission received 789 comment letters in support of the proposed project. One of the letters in support of the project was submitted by John Clark Brown, Jr., who stated that Venice has a very large homeless problem, Venice has the land and money to provide for this affordable housing project and that the homeless problem will continue to be an issue unless affordable housing is provided for them. John Clark Brown, Jr. further states that Lincoln Boulevard is a busy commercial street with good public transportation and nearby shopping and that the project will advance an important policy of the Coastal Act to make the coast accessible to all economic groups. The other 788 signed letters of support were submitted via email by Mia Lopez-Zubiri, an employee of the applicant, Venice Community Housing Corporation. The 788 letters used a form template and the reasons for support of the project include that the applicant will continue to address the overwhelming need for supportive housing for the homeless and chronically homeless and that the SPY offices on the ground floor and supportive services within the building will allow the applicant to continue to help individuals establish stability, improve their health and achieve other positive outcomes.

## II. CHANGES TO STAFF REPORT

Commission staff recommends the following changes to the staff report to clarify procedural requirements for public testimony at the hearing. The addendum also modifies the staff report with a minor correction on the fifth page of the staff report. Language removed from the staff report is identified in ~~strike-through~~ and additions are shown in **bold/underline**.

On page 2 of the staff report, add the following text:

**Important Hearing Procedure Note:** This is a substantial issue only hearing. Testimony will be taken only on the question of whether the appeal raises a substantial issue. Generally, and at the discretion of the Chair, testimony is limited to 3 minutes total per side. Please plan your testimony accordingly. Only the applicant, **appellants**, persons who opposed the application before the local government (or their representatives), and the local government shall be qualified to testify. Others may submit comments in writing. If the Commission determines that the appeal does raise a substantial issue, the de novo phase of the hearing will occur at a future Commission meeting, during which it will take public testimony.

On page 5 of the staff report, modify the following text:

**Resolution:** The Commission hereby finds that Appeal No. ~~A-5-VEN-20-0016~~ **A-5-VEN-20-0060** presents **NO SUBSTANTIAL ISSUE** with respect to the grounds on which the appeal has been filed under § 30602 of the Coastal Act regarding consistency with Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

On page 7-8 of the staff report, add the following text:

If the Commission decides to hear arguments and vote on the substantial issue question, those who are qualified to testify at the hearing, as provided by Section 13117 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulation, will have three minutes per side to address whether the appeal raises a substantial issue. The only persons qualified to testify before the Commission at the substantial issue portion of the appeal process are the applicants, **appellants**, persons who opposed the application before the local government (or their representatives), and the local government. Testimony from other persons must be submitted in writing. The Commission will then vote on the substantial issue matter. It takes a majority of Commissioners present to find that the grounds for the appeal raise no substantial issue.